

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of delivering multimedia content in the form of multimedia asset data files using a video-on-demand ("VOD")

5 management system, the method comprising:

receiving metadata associated with a multimedia asset data file from a content provider and a multiple systems operator ("MSO");

10 uploading the multimedia asset data file and associated metadata to a VOD server maintained by the MSO, wherein uploading the multimedia asset data file comprises

scheduling the uploading of the multimedia asset data file and associated metadata to a server maintained by the MSO, and

15 tracking the uploading of the multimedia asset data file and associated metadata to the server maintained by the MSO; and

providing usage reports relating to usage of multimedia asset data files by end users of the MSO.

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2. The method of claim 1, wherein metadata associated

with a plurality of multimedia asset data files are received
from a plurality of content providers and a plurality of MSOs.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein tracking the uploading
5 step comprises:

tracking receipt of the multimedia asset data file from the
content provider in elements, the elements comprising a feature
file, a preview file, a graphic file, and associated basic
metadata, wherein the associated basic metadata comprises
10 information on the elements used to confirm delivery of the
elements;

receiving an identification of the MSOs scheduled to
receive the multimedia asset data file from the content
provider; and

15 receiving delivery dates for delivery of the multimedia
asset data file to each of the MSOs identified by the content
provider.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the uploading step is
20 conducted using a delivery group, the delivery group comprising
a plurality of multimedia asset data files.

5. The method of claim 1, comprising:

registering the multimedia asset data file in order to
identify the file, wherein registering the multimedia asset data

5 file comprises:

assigning a provider identification number to a
content provider, and

assigning a unique identifier to a multimedia asset
data file provided by the content provider based upon the
10 provider identification number and a provider asset
identification, the provider asset identification being included
with the multimedia asset data file by the content provider.

6. The method of claim 1, comprising, prior to the upload
15 step, the steps of:

staging the multimedia asset data file by entering a name
for the multimedia asset data file into a staging directory; and

providing a master XML file for the multimedia asset data
file, the master XML file comprising distribution information,
20 scheduling information, content information, and an

identification for the multimedia asset data file, wherein the content information comprises data to enable retrieval of a plurality of elements to assemble the multimedia asset data file.

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7. The method of claim 6, wherein the elements used to assemble the multimedia asset data file comprise a movie/feature file, a preview file, and a graphic file.

10 8. The method of claim 1, wherein the multimedia asset data file comprises a plurality of elements, and the upload step comprises:

tracking transmission of the elements of the multimedia asset data file to the MSO using a pitcher appliance;

15 tracking receipt of the elements of the multimedia asset data file using a catcher appliance; and

transmitting an alarm signal to the VOD management system if any elements of the multimedia asset data file are not successfully received by the catcher appliance.

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9. The method of claim 1, wherein the multimedia asset data file is identified with an asset URL, and the upload step comprises:

providing the asset URL to the VOD server;

5 providing a schedule to the VOD server comprising instructions for the VOD server to request the multimedia asset data file from a catcher and metadata from the VOD management system; and

tracking retrieval of the multimedia asset data file and
10 associated metadata by initiating file transfers using the asset URL.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the file transfer is a file transfer protocol ("FTP") transfer.

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11. The method of claim 1, wherein the multimedia asset data file comprises a feature element identified by a first asset URL, a preview element identified by a second asset URL, and a graphic element identified by a third asset URL, and the
20 upload step comprises:

providing the first, second, and third asset URLs to the
VOD server;

submitting the first asset URL from the VOD server to a
catcher appliance;

5 tracking transmission of the feature element from the
catcher appliance to the VOD server using the first asset URL to
retrieve the feature element;

submitting the second asset URL from the VOD server to the
catcher appliance;

10 tracking transmission of the preview element from the
catcher appliance to the VOD server using the second asset URL
to retrieve the preview element;

submitting the third asset URL from the VOD server to the
catcher appliance; and

15 tracking transmission of the graphic element from the
catcher appliance to the VOD server using the third asset URL to
retrieve the graphic element.

12. The method of claim 11, comprising:

20 determining whether the feature element is properly

received by the VOD server and transmitting an alarm signal to the VOD management system if the feature element was not properly received.

5 13. The method of claim 11, comprising:

determining whether the preview element is properly received by the VOD server and transmitting an alarm signal to the VOD management system if the preview element was not properly received.

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14. The method of claim 11, comprising:

determining whether the graphic element is properly received by the VOD server and transmitting an alarm signal to the VOD management system if the graphic element was not properly received.

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15. The method of claim 1, wherein providing usage reports comprises:

receiving from the VOD server at regular intervals data on feature elements requested by end users of the MSO;

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creating a master reporting database using the data on
feature elements requested by end users; and

generating a usage report using the data contained in the
master reporting database.

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16. The method of claim 15, further comprising:

restricting access by content providers to the data
contained in the master reporting database using business rules
provided by the MSO.

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17. The method of claim 15, further comprising:

analyzing the usage report to determine end user viewing
characteristics; and

generating an advertising play list targeted to an end user
15 based upon the viewing characteristics of the end user, wherein
the advertising play list comprises advertising selected based
upon the viewing characteristics of the end user.

18. The method of claim 17, further comprising:

supplementing a multimedia asset data file with data contained in the usage report, wherein the usage report comprises usage data for the multimedia asset data file.

5 19. The method of claim 15, further comprising:

analyzing the usage report to determine end user viewing characteristics;

selecting multimedia asset data files based upon end user viewing characteristics; and

10 performing a campaign management function chosen from the group consisting of bundling selected multimedia asset data files, setting pricing for selected multimedia asset data files, and setting promotions for selected multimedia asset data files.

15 20. A method of using a VOD management system to distribute multimedia asset data files from a plurality of content providers to a plurality of multiple systems operators ("MSOs"), the method comprising:

receiving a plurality of multimedia asset data files from a
20 plurality of content providers;

receiving metadata associated with the plurality of
multimedia asset data files from the plurality of content
providers and a plurality of MSOs;

uploading the multimedia asset data files to video-on-
5 demand ("VOD") servers maintained by the MSOs using an asset URL
assigned to each multimedia asset data file;

tracking the uploading of the multimedia asset data files;
and

providing usage reports relating to usage of multimedia
10 asset data files by end users of the MSOs.

21. The method of claim 20, further comprising:

determining that the multimedia asset data files are
successfully received from the content providers by comparing
15 the received multimedia asset data files with business rules
provided by the MSOs.

22. The method of claim 20, wherein the uploading step
comprises:

20 uploading the associated metadata for the multimedia asset

data files to the VOD servers;

distributing a localized master schedule to each MSO; and

providing a schedule update from the VOD management system
to each MSO at regular intervals.

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23. The method of claim 22, wherein the tracking step
comprises:

tracking the upload of the multimedia asset data files to
the VOD servers by reference to each MSO's localized master
10 schedule; and

tracking the upload of the associated metadata to the VOD
servers by reference to each MSO's localized master schedule.

24. The method of claim 22, wherein each schedule update
15 comprises instructions for inserting and deleting multimedia
asset data files from each MSO's localized master schedule.